RESTORATION REVIEW

I also believe that all who have, in any way, been captivated and liberated by the way, the truth, and the life of Jesus, are bound to pass on the news. And I expect beyond the narrow confines of my own Christian traditions that I will be lead by others, in the great human family, to discover more of what it means that Jesus Christ is Lord.

—David H. C. Read

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Jesus Today . . .

JESUS IS OUR SABBATH REST

There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.—Heb. 4:9

One helpful rule of Biblical interpretation is when you come to a *therefore,* stop and ask what it is there for. The *therefore* in the above passage goes back to Heb. 3:16 and the verses following, where the writer refers to the promise of rest given to those who had been slaves in Egypt. Through their disobedience they forfeited the promise and came under God's judgment: "They will never enter the land where I had given them rest" (verse 18). He goes on to say that they did not enter into Canaan "because they did not believe."

Then he says in Heb. 4:1 that the promise has been offered to Christians and urges: "Let us take care, then, that none of you will be found to have failed to receive that promised rest." In the next verse he states again that while the Israelites heard the message "they did not accept it with faith," and in verse 3 he says it is the true believers today that will receive the promised rest. It is as if he could not say enough about the peril of disbelief, for in verse 6 he says it still again: "Those who first heard the Good News did not receive that rest, because they did not believe. There are others, then, who are allowed to receive it."

Then comes the line with the *therefore* in verse 9: "There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God." This is to say that even if those that fell in the wilderness because of their disobedience did not enter the promised land of rest, there is nonetheless the promise that God will make good. *There is a rest that remains.*

The writer is referring primarily to heaven, as the following verses indicate. Verse 10 says that the believer that enters into that rest (a heavenly rest) "will rest from his own work, just as God rested from his," while verse 11 urges us to "be diligent to enter that rest," lest we follow the example of the fallen Israelites and fail the promise.

But the believer has a Sabbath rest *now,* and he does not wait until death to enter into it. It is like eternal life, which we have both now and in the world to come, for eternal life is a quality of life, life in the Spirit. We likewise have rest now, a fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, as well as in the next world. In a very real sense *Jesus is our Sabbath rest.* That glorious promise that "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" applies, therefore, to the *now* as well as to God's tomorrow. In Jesus Christ we can enjoy the Sabbath rest that God has promised.

The only thing that can deny us of a Sabbath rest in Jesus is that which denied the Israelites of their promise of rest, *disbelief* Their problem is our problem, for we are slow of heart to believe, *really* believe, the promises that Christ has given. Such as Eph. 3:20: "To him who by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for or even think of." When that "rest" is ours, a power will be at work within us that can and will do more than we can even imagine! Ah, but to believe it.

Rest is what we all long for but few of us ever experience. Even religion is sometimes a hindrance. It was to religious people, battered by the legalisms of the Pharisees, that Jesus spoke of his rest: "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:29). Religion is often terribly frustrating to sincere people in that it makes impossible demands, or it assumes to make people righteous by making them "Good." The rest that Jesus offers is a life surrendered to God's grace. It is the peace that the world cannot give because it knows no such peace. It is the assurance that all is well with our soul, not because of what we have done but because of what He has done for us.

There is that blessed rest that awaits us, as indicated in Rev. 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, 'Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.'" But that promise begins in this world, for His rest frees us from the anxieties of a religion that makes us fearful rather than fearless, fretful rather than fulfilled.

That the rest is for us now is indicated in 2 Thess. 1:6-7, where we have two assurances: God will bring suffering upon those who make us suffer, and he will give rest to those of us who suffer. That rest is to be at home with Jesus; it is communion with the Holy Spirit.

To think of Jesus as our Sabbath rest is to recall what the Sabbath meant in the economy of God. The God of heaven made it the "sign" of the covenant between him and Israel, and Ezek. 20:12 shows that the Sabbath reminded the people of their holy calling. When Moses first spoke of the Sabbath, well before it was made part of the Ten Commandments, he introduced it with: "This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord'" (Ex. 16:23). To violate it meant extirpation, as Ex. 31:15 indicates: "Whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall be put to death." It was the one commandment that God himself had observed, for on the seventh day he rested from all his work.

The Sabbath was more significant than even circumcision, for circumcision was imposed on a child because of his descent, while the keeping of the Sabbath, often in the face of persecution or the temptations of worldly interests, was evidence of a strong religious faith. At the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt the Jewish army would not so

much as defend itself on the Sabbath, though it was eventually compelled to reverse this practice. The faithful Jews did not barter on that day, a day devoted to instruction and edification, and one closely linked to the three great feasts of the Jews — Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The Sabbath was at the heart of these feasts.

As we think of Jesus as our Sabbath rest, there are some interesting parallels with the Sabbath of the Jews.

1. Both were ordained of God as a sign between Him and His people. Matt. 1:22f interprets a prophecy in Isaiah as pointing to Jesus as the "sign" that *God is with us.*

2. Each is unique to religion. While other nations had circumcision, feasts, and ritual similar to Israel, the Sabbath was unique. Jesus is also unique, for there is nothing like him in all the religions of the world.

3. Both are eternal covenants. The Jewish Sabbath has *perpetual* significance (Ex. 31:16), and Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant that has cosmic implications.

4. The heavenly Father is personally involved in both. God calls the Jewish Sabbath *my* Sabbath, and He was the first to observe it. He was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19).

5. Each is bosomed in the rest of God. God gave the Jews the Sabbath because he loved them and wanted them to have a day of rest. He gives us Jesus so that we might know the depths of the rest of God.

6. Each is often hidden by man's proclivity to be rebellious and legalistic. Complaining of the behavior of the priests, Ezek. 22:26 says "they have hid their eyes from my sabbaths." Jesus passed a similar judgment: "For judgment I came into the world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind" (Jn. 9:38).

While the Sabbath was given out of God's tender loving care that his people might have rest, it was institutionalized and legalized into a boring and burdensome experience. At my side is one of the most interesting books in my library, *The Mishnah,* which is a collection of the rabbinical interpretations of the law of Moses. There are almost 800 pages of minutiae, elaborate details that deal with how the various laws were to be observed, according to the rabbis. One-fourth of the book deals with uncleanness. For example, a stove was rendered unclean if a drop of milk from a woman's breast (who was unclean) fell on it. In fact the stove was rendered unclean if the woman merely burnt herself while cooking and put her finger in her mouth! It then took all sorts of ritual to "purify" the stove.

It was this sort of thing that Jesus was referring to when he said, “They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger” (Matt. 23:4).

This book reveals how the rabbis sought to anticipate every possible contingency in Sabbath keeping. Some of the rules they came up with strike us as amusing, but it was serious business with them. Would tying a knot on the Sabbath be work? Not if one can tie the knot with *one* hand! Suppose one needs to spit on the Sabbath? He may do so if he spits on a smooth surface, but not on a rough surface since this would cause nature to work in absorbing the spittal. Even if a man plucked a hair from his head or his beard on the Sabbath he would be culpable.

It was this kind of legalistic logic that infuriated Jesus: “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath’” (Matt. 23:16). He went on to charge them with majoring in minors while neglecting the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith.

Legalism and rebellion will also turn our Sabbath rest in Jesus into a religion of fear and oppression. If the Jews lost the beauty of their Sabbath rest in superficial, legalistic details, we can lose our Sabbath rest in Jesus in the emptiness and superficialities of our own isms, which have little or nothing to do with “the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” *I will give you rest!* is his promise to us, which we do not find in programs, budgets, projects, or even in being *busy, busy, busy* in religion. We can even have a head filled with Scripture and yet a heart empty of the peace that Christ gives.

To his own followers Jesus could say, “You do not know how miserable and pitiful you are! You are poor, naked, and blind” (Rev. 3:17). And these were “faithful” Christians who presumed to be rich and in need of nothing! Their problem was that they had religion without rest. Note how the Lord advised hem: “Buy gold from me, pure gold, in order to be rich.” Jesus is asking to be their Sabbath rest.

He says that he stands at the door, knocking, asking for entrance into our hearts. If any of us will open the door, “I will come into his house and eat with him” (Rev. 3:20). This is the rest and peace that too few of us know.

There have been those all along who have given the Sabbath its proper place in their hearts rather than losing it in rules and regulations. Psalms 92 was composed in praise of the Sabbath and its meaning. The poet cries out, “How good it is to proclaim your constant love every morning and your faithfulness every night.” This is what the Sabbath rest was all about, a recognition of God’s constant love and his continuing faithfulness.

This is what we see in its perfection in Jesus Christ our Lord, our Sabbath rest. He is the ultimate sign of the Father's constant love and continuing faithfulness.—*the Editor*

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25 "True" Churches of Christ and Counting. . .

MUST THE DIVISIONS CONTINUE?

This letter from a reader in Dumas, Texas will serve as a basis for this article.

> The Church of Christ in Dumas has divided again. Now we have five factions, with very limited fellowship. We continue to love all the folks we know in each of them, as well as the Presbyterians we work for each day and many other lovely Christians in other buildings. The terrible, sad thing is that so much hate has been generated. Each new group seems to be more exclusivistic than before. There are some beautiful, faithful people involved in the breakup, but they cannot see what is happening. Each one will say he or she is trying to keep the Church of the Lord pure and couldn't do it where there were.

Dumas is a small west Texas town, and yet there are now *five* different kinds of Churches of Christ, each claiming to be the faithful church of the New Testament, with hardly any having anything to do with the others. What a scandal this is for a people who claim to be heirs of a unity movement! How can the citizens of Dumas be expected to take us seriously when we present five different interpretations of what it means to be "the restored church of the New Testatment"? It is apparent that something is terribly wrong, something way down deep in our religion. We divide and divide and divide, *hating* each other every step of the way. It is evident to the world that we have enough religion to cause us to hate but not enough to cause us to love.

Some of our own leaders are recognizing the seriousness of this problem. Reuel Lemmons, writing in the Firm Foundation (1979, p. 450), observed that "A movement which began on the glorious note of uniting the Christians in all the sects has degenerated in a mere century and a half, into subdividing that unity into narrow, sectarian camps." He dared to reach the unthinkable conclusion: "Each splinter splinters further. The very obvious fact is evidence that something is basically wrong in the attitude and aim of the movement."

A Disciples of Christ historian has written similarly to the above: “This spectacle of *divided unionists* is the most obvious indication that somewhere in the program of the movement is to be found the cause of schism.” *(Grounds of Division Among Disciples of Christ, 1940)*

A recent Ph.D. thesis has attempted to identify the cause of all this divisiveness, as if in response to the problem raised by Lemmons and DeGroot. C. W. Zenor, a fourth generation member of the Church of Christ and a graduate of Abilene Christian, wrote his thesis at the Ilif School of Theology (Denver) on *A History of Biblical Interpretation in the Church of Christ: 1901-1976.* He concludes that the reason Churches of Christ continue to divide can be found in the way they interpret the Scriptures. He studied the writings of three of the church’s leaders of successive generations: David Lipscomb, G. C. Brewer, and J. D. Thomas.

“The biblical interpretation of Lipscomb, Brewer, Thomas, and others in the Church of Christ,” he concludes, “has resulted in the creation of approximately twenty-five different kinds of Churches of Christ which have little or no fellowship with one another.”

He finds the Church of Christ formula for unity simple: “Our correct interpretation of the Bible has restored the one true New Testament church of the apostolic era and only as men are willing to become members of this saved body may they participate in authentic Christian unity.”

Tracing this to the way the Church of Christ has interpreted the Scriptures, Zenor says: “The Bible was seen as a blueprint or pattern for the individual and collective life of the restored one true church.” He charges that his people have created a “canon within the biblical canon” by selecting only those features of primitive Christianity that they believe should be restored. He not only questions the “proof-text” method and the “commands, approved examples, and necessary inferences,” which he found common in the church’s attempt to prove its positions, but he challenges the essence of Church of Christism: *the Church of Christ* is *the one true restored institution of man’s salvation, and the beliefs and practices of this church accurately reflect New Testament teaching.*

One of our own sons, schooled at Abilene, concluded his Ph.D. thesis with: “Theoretically, there is no end to the divisions in the Church of Christ because of its particular type of biblical interpretation.” He would not be surprised, therefore, by the report from Dumas: five different kinds of Churches of Christ in one west Texas town.

It is no wonder that he would also conclude: “It is difficult to imagine how the interpretation of the Bible by these three men could have shown itself to have failed, in any more dramatic manner, to have brought about the avowed purposes of the Restoration

Movement, than in the divisions, as seen in the foregoing list, and the potential for more in the future."

Now and again I am asked to provide a list of all these factions among us, a request that I do not attempt to satisfy. Except for the way I handled this matter in my history book, by placing all the factions in five "clusters," I have never attempted a detailed list, even though I am acquainted with most all the factions. For the sake of the record and to accommodate those who are interested I will herein present the list that Zenor compiled for his thesis. He finds 47 "divisions" in the Movement as a whole, but this list will be confined to the Churches of Christ.

1. *Firm Foundation faction* (1884). The journal was started to champion the view that those who were not knowingly baptized for the remission of sins had to be rebaptized.

2. *Church of Christ separation* (Sand Creek, II., 1889). A document of withdrawal of fellowship was prepared and read on this occasion.

3. *Black Churches of Christ* (post Civil War to present). He quotes A. J. Hairston, a black Church of Christ scholar: "The cold truth is that black and white churches of Christ represent two distinct fellowships."

4. *Anti-baptistery* (about 1900). Some who believed one should be immersed only in natural bodies of water stood aloof from those who accepted the baptistery innovation.

5. *Order of worship* (1888). Led by Alfred Ellmore, this group insisted that the order given in Acts 2:42 must be followed. Some of these churches still exist.

6. *Sommerism* (by 1907). Led by Daniel Sommer, this group became separate because of its opposition to Christian colleges and a professional ministry.

7. *Anti-women teachers* (about 1910). When classes began to be accepted, only males did the teaching. When women began to teach, it caused another faction.

8. Anti-literature (about 1910). Some accepted both classes and women teachers, but insisted that only the Bible should be used.

9. Anti-communion cups (about 1920). When individual cups became vogue, many insisted that "the cup" instituted by Jesus should obtain.

10. *Premillennialism* (began 1930's). Many congregations were excluded for holding this view.

11. *Anti-fermented wine* (late 1920's). When some advocated use of wine instead of grape juice, it became a dividing point.

12. *Anti-Sunday School* (1920-1940). During these years there was a great deal of debating on this issue, and dividing, though there was anti-SS sentiment in the Movement since the 1820's. There are today some 800 non-SS churches, but they are sub-divided several ways.

13. *Loaf must be broken twice* (1940's). Called "the bread breakers," they are separate from those who break the loaf but once or not at all. This is a faction within the non-SS group.

14. *Only leavened bread for communion* (1940's).

15. *No plate for communion bread* (1940's). The unleavened bread is to be passed person to person by hand only.

16. *Contribution to be laid on table* (1940's).

17. *Communion must be taken around the table* (1940's). The Supper is not to be served away from the table.

18. *No breaking of bread before passing*. (1940's).

19. *No handle on communion cup*. (1940's).

20. *Cup must have handle* (1940's). These last eight factions fall within the non-SS/ one cup cluster of churches.

21. *Non-cooperative, "conservative" Churches of Christ* (1950's). Sometimes called *antis* or anti-Herald of Truth, this is the largest of the divisions, with as many as 100,000 adherents.

22. *Divorce and remarriage* (1950-1980).

23. *Unity in Diversity* (1958 to present). Led by Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett, "This perspective has now been accepted by a great many in the mainstream Church of Christ."

24. *Support of orphan homes* (1960's). Even among pro-home advocates there was conflict over whether elders of the church should be the board for the home or whether the home should have a separate board.

25. *Liberal churches* (1963 on). Zenor places his own Wheat Ridge Heights Church of Christ in this category and names it as one of first. He estimates that 100 churches would fall within this category.

26. *Tongue-speaking* (by 1965). He refers to the many that were disfellowshipped over this issue, including Pat Boone in 1970, because of "tongue-singing."

27. *Division within non-cooperatives* (1966 on). Led by Editor Charles A. Holt, part of the anti-Herald of Truth group contended for a more democratic rule of the churches, with almost no structural form and a denial of authoritative eldership.

28. *Moderating group within mainstream Church of Christ* (by 1967). Led by Ira Rice, this group is somewhere between the *Firm Foundation* and the *Gospel Guardian* of the "conservative" churches. Zenor sees such "flux" in this area that it is difficult to tell if these "moderates" will become completely separate, but he suggests that the lines are already drawn.

There you have the list, which is probably as complete as you will find. Zenor supposes it is the only one available since it is such an unpopular subject. So as to present only the Church of Christ factions, I renumbered his list, but the breakdown is his own.

I was surprised to find what Zenor calls "the Ketcherside/Garrett type churches" in his list since they draw no lines of fellowship, but he states that this persuasion is the only one (beside his own, the "Liberal" churches) that does not follow the kind of Biblical interpretation that he is challenging. I credit him for being perceptive enough to recognize that while Carl Ketcherside and I are different in our handling of Scripture and church problems, we are *not* liberal. Brother Zenor, I understand (from a phone conversation), goes so far as to question the historical basis of traditional Christianity and identifies, more or less, with the Unitarian persuasion. It is very odd, therefore, that he would care to list his church within Church of Christ categories. It just shows what ACU and four generations can do to a guy, even a Unitarian!

One of the "conservative" journals a few years back reported on a conversation with C. W. Zenor, whom they were "writing up" as a liberal. When Zenor was asked if he was "as liberal as Leroy Garrett," he made it quite clear that he was *far* to the left of the editor of *Restoration Review.* The author of the article supposed that no one in the Church of Christ could be farther to the left than I!

It is ironic that Carl Ketcherside and I have all these years been christened by our loving brethren as *liberals,* while in fact when it comes to the basics of the faith we are probably more conservative than our critics. If we are "liberals" among Churches of Christ, it is only because we do not believe in making instrumental music a test of fellowship or because we believe there are Christians in other churches. If that makes us liberals, then all the early leaders of our Movement were liberals, with the possible exception of one man, Moses E. Lard.

So it is reassuring that at least one scholarly effort among us would put old Carl and me where we belong, *open, free, inclusive, but still holding to the fundamentals of our historic faith.*

One more point from Zenor's thesis. After examining the Church of Christ's handling of Scripture through 325 pages, he concludes by pointing to the cost of "the authoritarian attitude." He says it has blinded us to the insights and discoveries that would have come through a more open fellowship, and it has kept others from seriously examining our plea. "Thus, genuine truth-seeking, real communication, and any authentic progress in biblical interpretation were severely curtailed," he states.

That is too high a price to pay. With the world aflame with wars, starvation, crime, terrorism, and with secularism, materialsim, and consumerism running rampant, we cannot be the true Church of Christ upon earth unless we learn to love one another even as He has loved us. And when His love is poured into hearts through the indwelling Spirit, we will with a united voice bear witness to a lost and suffering world.—*the Editor*

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IS BAPTISM ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION?

A few issues back I had a piece about the Norris-Wallace debate in Fort Worth back in 1934. I observed that Foy E. Wallace, Jr. affirmed in that debate that baptism is essential to salvation, and I criticized this as a vulnerable proposition, one that is questionable both in the light of Scripture and in the thinking of the best minds of our own history. I stated in the article that the Bible does not teach that baptism is essential to salvation, but that it is a deduction that we draw from what it does teach.

Readers have both called and written, expressing concern over my position, and asking for clarification. It is evident that "the essentiality of baptism," which originated not in Scripture but in the dogmas of Roman Catholicism, is one of our sacred cows. And yet I understand the misgivings of those who have expressed concern, for the Scriptures are explicit in what they say about baptism, and it is understandable, considering where we come from, that we would make such a deduction. But it is in order for someone to remind us that the Bible says nothing about the *essentiality* of baptism.

One of our readers in Chattanooga sent us a newspaper account of a big TV debate, to be taped there May 17, on "Is Baptism Necessary to Salvation?," between two professors from Harding University, Jerry Jones and Jimmy Allen, and a Baptist minister named David Kingdon and James Bjornstad, a professor at Northeastern Bible College. The Harding men are Church of Christ preachers and are affirming the proposition.

This shows that my piece about Norris-Wallace was relevant, for our folk are still debating the essentiality of baptism. This debate will be televised in more than 3,000 cities near the end of June by the Christian Broadcasting Network, so you might watch for it if you are interested.

This news item gives me an occasion to write further on this question. Understand, for *me*, baptism was essential to my salvation, for I believed that this was a command of God and that it was for the remission of my sins. Just as for *me* it is essential that I gather on each Lord's day and break bread with fellow believers, for I understand this to be the will of God for me. But in neither case, whether the Supper or baptism, can I make it an absolute for everyone else, for we are all at different stages in our understanding and submission to the will of God.

So I would be comfortable, in the light of Scripture, affirming that *It is essential for one to obey what he understands to be the will of God.* This of course is subject to a legalistic interpretation, for we are not saved by what we do but by God's grace, and none of us responds perfectly to what we concede to be essential. So I would immerse even that proposition deeply in the grace of God.

I can also affirm what the Scriptures actually *say* about baptism. I believe it is (in some sense) "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), "the washing of regeneration" (Tit. 3:5) — note that it is the *washing* of regeneration, not regeneration itself!, and that it is the formal act that puts us "into Christ" (Gal. 3:27). It is also "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21), and, in some sense, it "washes away sin" (Acts 22:16) and saves us (1 Pet. 3:21).

If we will speak only as the Bible speaks, our position cannot be gainsaid. Any informed Bible teacher would be reluctant to challenge the above paragraph, but if I deduce from the above that baptism is therefore essential to going to heaven, I conclude what cannot be proven. It might be essential for *me* and for *you* but not necessarily everyone else, unless one supposes that everyone has the same measure of light and opportunity and therefore the same obligation before God.

If there is even one unbaptized person in heaven, the proposition is false. If the God of heaven receives a single unbaptized soul from all the billions of earth, then baptism is not essential to salvation. Indeed, this proposition would tie the hand of God and compel him to withdraw his mercy, for each soul *must* be baptized to enter heaven. So those who insist on the absolute essentiality of baptism would circumvent a God who "loves mercy."

Take this case: a Church of Christ preacher leads a penitent believer into a swollen stream to immerse him. An under current suddenly sweeps the man downstream before he was able to immerse him. The body is not found until the next day.

Ah, but that never happens, we lamely respond. That very thing *did* happen, and it was reported in a Dallas paper recently, though it did not identify the denomination of the preacher, as I recall.

However firm your position on baptism may be, can you really believe that the God of heaven would send such a person to hell when he was in the very act of trying to obey Him? If you do, I can only conclude that you have a demon for a God. If you don't, then you don't believe that baptism is essential to salvation. If there can be one exception, there can be many, such as those who are seeking to do His will, *sincerely* and *searchingly,* but they have not yet come to an understanding about baptism.

Allow me to frame a proposition: *It is inconceivable that anyone who dies loving God will be lost.* You will quote the passage that says if one loves God he will obey God's commands. Right! To the degree that he understands those commands. This is why I agree with Alexander Campbell that there is only one absolute must: *sincerity before God,* or a love for God that hungers to obey Him in all things, according to his understanding. This is the proposition that really bothers me, for how many of us really love God like that, whether baptized or not?

And one more proposition: *It is inconceivable that anybody that has life in Christ will be in hell.* When does life come to the sinner? When he believes that Jesus Christ is the son of God! "He that believes on me has eternal life," Jesus said in Jn. 5:24. Again and again the Scriptures make it clear that one has life when he believes. Even the Church of Christ recognizes this, even if not enthusiastically, for we concede that baptism typifies the *birth* of the child of God, not the beginning of his life. Life begins with faith! Just as physical life does not begin at birth, so the believer's life does not begin at baptism but when he accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior.

There must be many who have life in Christ who have not yet confirmed this in the ordinance that God has ordained for this purpose, not because they are rebellious or indifferent, but because they do not yet understand. Are we going to say that all such ones have to go to hell? They have *life* and yet lost! Can we live with such conclusions?

The position I am taking in no wise compromises the teaching on baptism in Scripture. We are to teach what the Bible says on the subject and thus immerse believers into Christ in reference to the remission of their sins, noting that the church universal has always recognized baptism as that ordinance that brings one into fellowship with Christ and his church. But let us not circumvent what the Bible says with deductions that are legalistic and, if I may say so, *cruel.*

The doctrine of the "essentiality of baptism," born in Roman dogma, has led to some grievous concepts and practices. Take the Roman Catholic nurse that is compelled to "baptize" even a fetus or a stillborn child. It is a serious question with some Roman Catholics as to what they should do with aborted tissue, lest the soul they believe to be there be lost in hell.

Church of Christ dogma on the essentiality of baptism moves in a different but similar direction. It would dechristianize a large portion of the Christian world and consign some of God's noblest saints to an eternal hell. Thank God that the judgment seat is in heaven and not Nashville—or Chattanooga!—*the Editor.*

We confess that the blood of Jesus Christ alone cleanses us from all sins. Even this, however, is a metaphorical expression. The efficacy of his blood springs from his own dignity, and from the appointment of his Father. The blood of Christ, then, *really* cleanses us who believe from all sin.

Behold the goodness of God in giving us a formal proof and token of it, by ordaining a baptism expressly "for the remission of sins!" The water of baptism, then, *formally* washes away our sins. The blood of Christ *really* washes away our sins.

—Alexander Campbell, Macalla Debate, p. 116

IS UNITY MORE IMPORTANT THAN TRUTH?

There is an interesting article in a recent issue of *Guardian of Truth* by Robert E. Waldron of Hanceville, Alabama in which he raises the provocative question *Is unity and fellowship more important than truth?* While he answers this with a resounding no, he is persuaded that unity and fellowship have been made more important than truth by the leaders of our Movement from the beginning, particularly by Thomas Campbell in his *Declaration and Address.* He also accuses Alexander Campbell of making truth subservient to unity, especially in his latter years.

He also states: "This influence can be seen in the thinking of nearly all of us but particularly of those who have drunk deeply of the philosophies of Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett."

This judgment from our brother in Alabama leads me to ask myself: *Do I believe that unity* is *more important than truth?* Or to put it another way, *In order to achieve unity and enjoy fellowship are we to compromise what we believe to be truth?*

I both agree and disagree with the proposition that unity is more important than truth. Or I would answer the brother's question with both yes and no. It depends on what truth is made to mean. He does not seem to consider the fact that some truths are more important than others. Some truths are crucial, absolutely necessary to unity. Other truths are vitally important but not necessary for unity and fellowship to prevail. Some truths are subordinate and of less consequence, and have little to do with fellowship. So in dealing with this question we must distinguish between truth as *essential, vital,* and *subordinate.*

The truth that Peter confessed at Caesarea Philippi, that Jesus is the Christ the son of God, is *essential* for Christian fellowship, as would be the gospel facts of his death, burial, and resurrection.

There are other truths, such as the teaching on grace as set forth in *Romans* or "the blessed hope" as taught in Tit. 2:13, that are *vital* in enhancing fellowship between believers and strengthening their oneness, but are not necessary to fellowship and unity. I have sisters and brothers who are insecure about their future, knowing little about the grace of God, and who have not even heard of the blessed hope. But still they are God's children and my brethren and in the fellowship. Some of us are more mature, perhaps because we have "seen" the grace of God and we "abound in hope," as Rom. 15:13 teaches. Others of us are "babes in Christ" who need milk, not solid food. Some of us are spiritual, while others of us are inclined toward carnality. But we are all united in Christ and in the fellowship, even when we are far from what we ought to be.

Then there are truths subordinate to these, important to be sure but hardly in the category of "In essentials, unity." I have brothers in the faith who do not believe in elders, those who believe that women should minister to the church in all ways that men do, and those who insist that worship consists of five ordained acts that take place Sunday morning in the church building. I disagree on all three points, and I am convinced that the Scriptures address these questions—there is *truth* here somewhere on all three issues—but whatever conclusions one may reach they cannot be made *essential* or *vital* truths. We can still be the Body of Christ and not have the truth on these matters. They are therefore *subordinate* to the larger issues, and for the sake of unity and fellowship we can be patient and forbearing and give others time to grow.

Another way to put it is that some truths are desirable and edifying, and we wish that others could enjoy them as we do, but they are not essential for brotherhood. Or to put it still another way, some truths are necessary for *being* (in Christ), while other truths are for *well-being* (in Christ).

I realize that we will not fully agree on which truths fall into what categories, but it will greatly help if we will recognize that while all truths are truths they are not all equally important. A sister may hold to a thousand errors and yet be very close to the heart of Jesus. A brother may now be blinded to a lot of truths he will know down the road, but *today,* in spite of his ignorance, he is a victorious Christian. Unity and fellowship can be real and precious with both of these in that they believe and know Jesus Christ as Lord, the *essentials* of the faith. They may not yet know some vital truths and many subordinate ones, but we do not have to wait for them to grow (to be as mature as we are!) before we accept them as sister and brother.

If our Alabama brother has a problem with the distinctions I have drawn, I would remind him that they are grounded in Scripture, in the very principle of spiritual growth. Otherwise the apostle would never have written "Welcome the person who is weak in faith, but do not argue with him about his opinions" (Rom. 14:1). Some are weak and some are strong (in reference to scruples); some are "right" and some are "wrong," he is saying, but they are to accept each other. And he says "Each one should firmly make up his own mind" regarding days and diet, which is different from the mandates of our time where each one is required to accept the interpretation of some preacher or the elders.

Paul was certain he had the truth about his freedom to eat meats, and yet he said "If food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall" (1 Cor. 8:13). Is that not placing fellowship before truth, a *subordinate* truth? And yet in a different circumstance, with those who would compromise the gospel, he says, "To them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be

preserved for you" (Gal. 2:5). Here truth came before fellowship because the issue was essential to the faith.

We must all pray for such discernment, lest we make the issue of instrumental music as important as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, or whether we can have cooperative missionary enterprises like Herald of Truth as important as the lordship of Jesus. When we learn to make differences we will treat each other differently, realizing that we are a diverse lot and that in that diversity there can be unity.

So, *yes,* unity is to be placed before truth when that truth is of lesser importance than unity itself, which, you must remember, is the very nature of the Body of Christ. Then again, *no,* truth must come before unity when the gospel itself is challenged. In such instances we will stand with the apostle and not compromise or submit, not even for a moment.—*the Editor*

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SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

Robert Meyers

It is an enviable profession which allows a man to be paid for reading widely in early American literature, especially if his twin profession has to do with religion. The first literature in this country dealt often with religious themes, and one of the most interesting things about them is that they so strikingly resemble modern problems.

Thomas Hariot's *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588) was one of the first "promotion tracts" to encourage Englishmen to migrate to America. Hariot says in it that he tried to tell some of the Indians about the Bible and that he found many of them "glad to touch it, to embrace it, to kisse it, to hold it to their brests and heades, and stroke over all their bodie with it; to shew their hungrie desire of that knowledge which was spoken of."

How strikingly this illustrates the human tendency to interpret as they *wish,* rather than to consider possibilities which would make them less happy. Consciously or not, Hariot probably misread the intentions of those Indians. They were not so concerned to have the knowledge he spoke of as they were to exploit the magical potency they thought his book must possess.

It was obvious that the white man attached some special reverence to the small black book. Undoubtedly, the Indians thought of it as an amulet to ward off disease, and a charm to confer the peculiar powers of those who brought it.

The Bible still carries some of that same potency for some people. I recall a good friend at Freed-Hardeman College many years ago who dropped his Bible, picked it up, and reverently kissed it. He explained that his mother had taught him to do this.

I would guess that it is this sense of the magical potency of an *object* that causes some people so much difficulty when the Bible is studied critically and analytically. The doctrine that there is not a "single error of any kind" in the entire Bible, as one of our Bible department heads once said to 1500 college students in chapel, serves to create an object which it would be blasphemous to study critically.

One is lead to wonder, from Hariot's remarks, how often we say things are such-and-such because we *want* them to be so. Perhaps even Hariot may have known the true interest of his Indian acquaintances if he had taken time to think, but he so ardently *wanted* them to want Biblical knowledge that he was willing to construe their actions in terms of his desire.

* * * *

John Winthrop, governor several times of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, refers to some people who wanted "the Indians rooted out, as being of the cursed race of Ham." It is interesting to find, so soon in our history, the Biblical curse invoked to get rid of some undesirable element in the population. Later it would be the Negro who would be put under the curse of Ham by white supremacists with a flair for invoking the authority of Scripture. We talk of progress because we have television and picture-taking rockets flying by Saturn, but the truth is that it is still more fashionable in some circles to *use* the Bible for selfish interests than to seek expert opinion as to what it may mean.

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

Back in the 1890's the Christian Church in McGregor, Texas divided over three issues, according to court records: instrumental music, societies, and the doctrine that one had to knowingly be baptized for the remission of sins. The records refer to the "conservatives" as "the *Firm Foundation* faction," a journal that began so as to champion

the rebaptism issue. The case went all the way to the Texas Supreme Court, and each time the "progressives" won, the courts ruling that the innovations were not a repudiation of the original intent of the Movement. So, from 1899 the Christian Church and Church of Christ have been separated in McGregor. A recent report on the First Christian Church in McGregor, as it has been called since the trials, reveals that a Church of Christ minister is presently serving in the pulpit, and that it is "Independent" in that it uses *Standard* materials, etc., and yet it is officially a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation.

After praising Bob Marshall, minister of the Redondo Beach Church of Christ (Ca.), as one of the best in the business, Jimmie Lovell, editor of *Action*, wonders if it would not be all right for Bob (and others of course) to preach in a robe. He thinks this would be better than making a "fashion show" out of the pulpit, and that "robes do play important roles in our society." He indicates that he would be ready for it. As of now there is no Church of Christ minister that wears a robe in the pulpit that we know of. Who will be first? With a gentle push from Jimmie Lovell it might not be too far down the road. But what color should they be? Since we have to be a peculiar people, I suggest polka dot.

Prof. Donald McGavran, the father of the church growth movement and founder of the School of World Missions at Fuller Seminary, has, along with his wife Ruth, joined the Arcadia Church of Christ in Arcadia, Ca. It is unusual enough for a renowned Disciples minister to become a member of a Church of Christ, but even more unusual that the McGavrans are now members of *three* churches, which is part of their lifetime witness to the unity of Christ's church, particularly those of the Restoration tradition. That is something to think about. Suppose a lot of us belonged to all three of the main groups of our Movement, and rotated our "fellowship" from the Disciples to the Christian Church to the Church of Christ?

Gene Getz, director of the Dallas Center for Church Renewal, was on the program of the Spiritual Renewal Conference in Nashville in April, which is a gathering of renewal-conscious Church of Christ-Christian Church folk. Gene is especially aware of the plight of single parents in the church. In an article in "Single Parents Can" in *Kindred Spirit*, published by Dallas Seminary, he advises the single parent to have realistic goals and not to expect too much of either society or the church. He advises Christian families to adopt a single parent family by praying for them regularly, inviting them to your home and including them in special events.

In the May 11 *Firm Foundation* Reuel Lemmons, the editor, wrote: "There is no more sign of sectarianism than the fences we labor to build in order to isolate someone whose method differs from ours, especially when his method is successful. Such actions are the evidence of a closed mind, a closed mind even the Bible cannot open." The editor leaves it

to the reader to decide whether this fence-building over methods would include things like instrumental music and missionary societies as well as the Herald of Truth radio-TV project and Sunday Schools.

David H. Bobo, Fountain Square Church of Christ in Indianapolis, wrote in his church bulletin of the death of a fellow minister in the Church of Christ in the same city, W. L. Totty, a man who had vigorously opposed him for many years. Bobo explains that he and Totty were both trained in the "old school" of the Church of Christ, but that he was soon compelled to move in a different direction, especially in reference to Christian ethics and Biblical teaching. Now that his old antagonist is gone, Bobo writes: "In spite of the fact that my reputation among people who do not know me suffered greatly from his attacks, I am glad I knew Brother Totty and I hold no ill feelings about him. I can say with all the sincerity of my heart, 'God rest his soul.'" Upon reading this I passed it along to Ouida. "How tragic," I said to her, "it is enough to cause one to weep." Jesus came to make us brothers and to cause us to treat each other as brothers. And yet even preaching brethren spend a lifetime together in the same city *as enemies,* all in the name of sound doctrine. While we appreciate David Bobo's forgiving spirit, let us hope that stories like this among us are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. It is high time for us to realize who the real enemy is. As for David Bobo, it should be more widely known that he is one of our best educated ministers and ablest scholars, as well as a devoted Christian. He is presently teaching both Hebrew and Greek at Indiana Christian U., along with his ministry at Fountain Square. That school recently honored him with a D.D. degree, as if he needed another degree! I regret to add that all these years he has been one of the most maligned men among Churches of Christ.

We congratulate Bobbie Lee Holley upon becoming editor of *Mission.* But there has been at least one woman editor within the Movement before her, Mrs. Daniel Sommer, who took over her husband's paper and wouldn't let him write for it. So as to stay within that tradition I wrote the new editor suggesting that she put her husband Ed on *Mission's* staff and then reject whatever he submits! Bobbie Lee will make one of our great editors. Write her at 1508 Ephesus Rd., Chapel Hill, NC 27514 if you want to subscribe to her journal, which is on the verge of a new era.

SPECIAL SORT OF TRIP TO ISRAEL

We invite you to join us on a trip to Israel, Nov. 8-18, with David R. Reagan of Lamb and Lion Ministry, a frequent visitor to that country and an expert in the field, as co-sponsor. We visit Tel Aviv, Old Jaffa, the Valley of Sharon, Caesarea, Haifa, Akko,

Nazareth, Cana, Tiberias, the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum, the Golan Heights, Mt. Hermon, Caesarea Phillipi. This includes lunching at a Jewish kibbutz. That is only the first three days. Six nights in Jerusalem at the famed King David Hotel provide even more educational pleasure: the Mount of Olives, old and new Jerusalem, Mt. Zion, Dead Sea Scroll Museum, Holocaust Museum, the Dead Sea, Bethlehem, Qumran, Masada, to mention a few. The Bible will be your guide. It will be a spiritual feast along with lots of fun with some of the most delightful Christians in the world. The cost is $1690 from New York. We will send you a detailed brochure upon request.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

I am a new reader, thanks to a dear friend who sent me a subscription as a gift. There is only one thing wrong with your publication. I can't lay it down until I have read it completely. The articles are the kind "you can get your teeth into." Am so happy to have found you.—*Neligh, Nebraska*

(We discover a lot of new friends this way that we would never have made contact with otherwise. Most all of you have as many as three acquaintances who might appreciate reading this journal. Why not give them a chance? When you renew your sub, you can send us three other names, all four for only 12.00 for the year. This is one thing that nearly anyone can do, and it may accomplish more than you realize.—*Ed*.)

I grew up in West Virginia near old Bethany at New Cumberland, where I was ordained 55 years ago. I never heard of the instrumental division until I got to Johnson Bible College. It sent me for a row of stumps. After a lot of reading on the subject I decided it was a matter of the poor churches against the wealthy ones. There were plenty of poor churches in those days.— *R. B. McDonald, Box 27, Prairie City, Ia.*

For several years my thoughts have been in the direction which you so beautifully express in *Restoration Review.* There are many in the Church of Christ who are leaning in this direction but do not realize that others are *thinking* too!—*Welch Noblet, 7014 Igou Gap Rd., Chattanooga, Tn.*

The political situation in Guatemala continues to be lots better than it was before the coup. The new government has a lot of former officials in jail. Mt. Chicon in Mexico spewed out ash that reached us. Our sun was blotted out one day. The poor cattle had to eat

already dry grass. Our rain barrels are empty but we have a little water in a shallow well that we boil for drinking.—*J. C. and Mim Reed, Flores, Peten, Guatemala.*

It is amazing how far we have strayed from the original goals and spirit of the noble saints who set out to unite the Christians among all the sects in the last century. You are performing a valuable service by informing those who live among legalistic churches of the growing number of disciples who are learning the joy of being free in Christ.—*Stan Daulton, Peoria, IL.*

Even though I am not an "official" member fo the Restoration movement (or "Reformation" as you say in your history book), I am in hearty agreement with its spirit and principles. I see a lot of parallels between this movement and the early days of the Assemblies of God in which I minister.—*Timothy B. Cremeens, Springfield, Oh.*

I very much appreciate the articles in *Restoration Review.* It truly is a breath of fresh air in our sectarian world. I always read it as soon as it comes, without putting it down. Thank you and may the Lord continue to bless and use you.—Jesse Ireton, Rt. 1, Shirley, In.

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BOOK NOTES

Being an admirer of the Russian novelist whose prophetic voice is heard in East and West alike, I have special interest in Edward Ericson's *Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision.* The author takes each of the great novels and shows that Solzhenitsyn is to be read as a moral prophet rather than a political writer. 6.95 post paid.

We have a new supply of that informative little book, *The Difficult Sayings of Jesus* by William Neil at only 2.10 postpaid. Another small but challenging volume is Malcolm Muggeridge's *The End of Christendom,* which is a daring critique of modern Christianity. 3.10 pp.

John R. W. Stott's titles are among the few that we stock permanently, for we highly recommend everything he has written. *Christ the Controversalist* is a must, 4.50 pp. Others are *Our Guilty Silence* (3.50), *Basic Christianity* (3.50), *Your Mind Matters* (2.25), and *Men Made New,* which is an exposition on Rom. 5-8, (3.50).

If you are interested in reading about other religions, we suggest *Dialogue: The Key to Understanding Other Religions,* by Donald Swearer, 5.95.

The Meaning of the Millennium, edited by Robert Clouse, is an excellent study of four views, historic premillennialism, postmillennialism, dispensationalism, amillennialism. One finds each view attractively, even persuasively, set forth. The men then respond to each other. 4.75 pp.

John White's little book, *The Cost of Commitment,* tells you what it means to take up your cross daily. He tells you how this relates our situation of not being called upon to suffer persecution. 2.75 pp. A similar book that questions whether Christians can "play it safe" and calls for a new way for God's people is Bruce Larson's *Risky Christianity,* 4.95 pp.

Dorothy Pape's *In Search of God's Ideal Woman* at 6.50 is an honest examination of all the NT teaching on women and their ministry. The chapter on women's role in the early church is especially challenging.

Harry Boer's *A Short History of the Early Church* at 5.50 pp. continues to sell, perhaps because it gives a brief account of so many subjects that we need to know something about: persecutions, Gnosticism, Marcionism, Diocletian, Constantine, Nicean creed, etc., etc.

Robert Richardson's *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell,* two volumes complete in one volume, is a gold mine of information on our history. 19.95 pp.

If you have any interest at all in your heritage, you should read *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches* by the editor of *Restoration Review,* a hardbound 739-page book at only 21.95 postpaid. We believe it is safe to recommend this book to those who do not ordinarily enjoy reading history.

Some of our new subscribers might be interested in our bound volumes, which cost but little more than the yearly subscription. *Principles of Unity and Fellowship* (1977) and *The Ancient Order* (1978) are 5.50 each, while our double volume for 1979-80, entitled *Blessed Are the Peacemakers* and *With All the Mind* is 8.50.

Please, since we cannot take the time for bookkeeping, send your check in advance. The prices include the postage.

If you do not care to buy bound volumes, but would like a sampling of loose copies over the past decade, we will send you 18 back issues, selected at random, for only 3.00.

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